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JOSEPH HENRY THAYER: THE MAN AND HIS WORK.

By PROFESSOR C. J. H. ROPES, D.D.,
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THE principal facts of Professor Thayer's life¹ are soon stated. He was born in Boston, November 7, 1828, fitted for college in the Boston Latin School, and graduated at Harvard in 1850. He was usher in the Boston Latin School, 1850-51; private tutor to J. P. Cushing's sons, 1851-53; and during 1853-54 he traveled in Europe. Then he studied theology one year in the Harvard Divinity School and two at Andover Seminary, where he graduated in 1857. After preaching for a year at Quincy, Mass., he became pastor of the Crombie Street Congregational Church in Salem, Mass. Here he remained five years, with the exception of parts of the years 1862-63, when he served as chaplain of the Fortieth Regiment, Massachusetts Volunteers. In 1864 he was called to the professorship of sacred literature in Andover Seminary, and continued there until his resignation in 1882. He then moved to Cambridge, and in 1883-84 gave some lectures in the Harvard Divinity School. In 1884, after the death of Dr. Ezra Abbot, he succeeded to the Bussey professorship of New Testament criticism. He resigned this chair in the summer of 1901, after which he went to Europe for needed rest and with plans for future activities. There he was seized with the illness which terminated fatally November 26, 1901, about six weeks after his return home.

Among the honors he received, the following degrees may be mentioned: D.D., Yale, 1873; Harvard, 1884, and Princeton, 1896 (at its sesquicentennial); Litt.D., Trinity College, Dublin, 1892 (at its tercentenary).

¹ Some of Professor Thayer's friends and several of his former pupils have sent me valuable material and lent me letters of his; kindnesses which I am permitted to acknowledge only in this general way.



THE LATE REV. PROFESSOR JOSEPH HENRY THAYER, D.D.

As a boy he was docile, quiet, and dutiful. Since he was an only son, it is perhaps not surprising that in early life he evinced less taste for books and less aptitude in learning than did any one of his five sisters. In the Latin school and again at Harvard he was much influenced by the late Professor Henry Warren Torrey, who was his teacher in both institutions. For a year at Harvard the tutor engaged this student as his reader in the evenings to supplement his own defective eyesight. "Contact with a teacher of such stimulating power, a scholar of such indefatigable enthusiasm and such unerring accuracy, a man of such absolute devotion to truth, such supreme allegiance to duty, such profound and pervasive Christian purpose, could not fail to inspire his pupil with lofty impulses," and to hold up high ideals before him. Though always diligent, a fly-leaf of his Latin lexicon illustrates the progress of his spirit. It is inscribed: "Boston Latin School, '*Labor omnia vincit*;' " and later: "Harvard College, '*Labor ipse voluptas*.'" His unremitting industry for fifty-five years after entering college attests his fidelity to these mottoes.

He was brought up under strong religious influences from both parents, but his mother especially devoted herself to her children on Sunday with Bible lessons, reading and singing of hymns, making the day—as her children still testify—"one of the shortest and happiest in the week." Professor Thayer seems to have been a religious boy. It is remembered that he used to attend a boys' prayer-meeting, but it was not until 1853 that he joined the Old South Church. It is interesting to note that, while as a young man he usually attended Dr. Gannett's church (Unitarian) with his father, yet his own views followed those of his mother, and led him into the Congregational church. His experience thus resembled that of Phillips Brooks, and resulted in a large charity and understanding for those of differing beliefs, together with a firm and discriminating hold upon his own.

His decision to study for the ministry seems to have been made during the year of travel which succeeded his uniting with the church. His theological student life was marked by two pronounced characteristics: his perpetual efforts for self-improvement in every direction, including what most deem

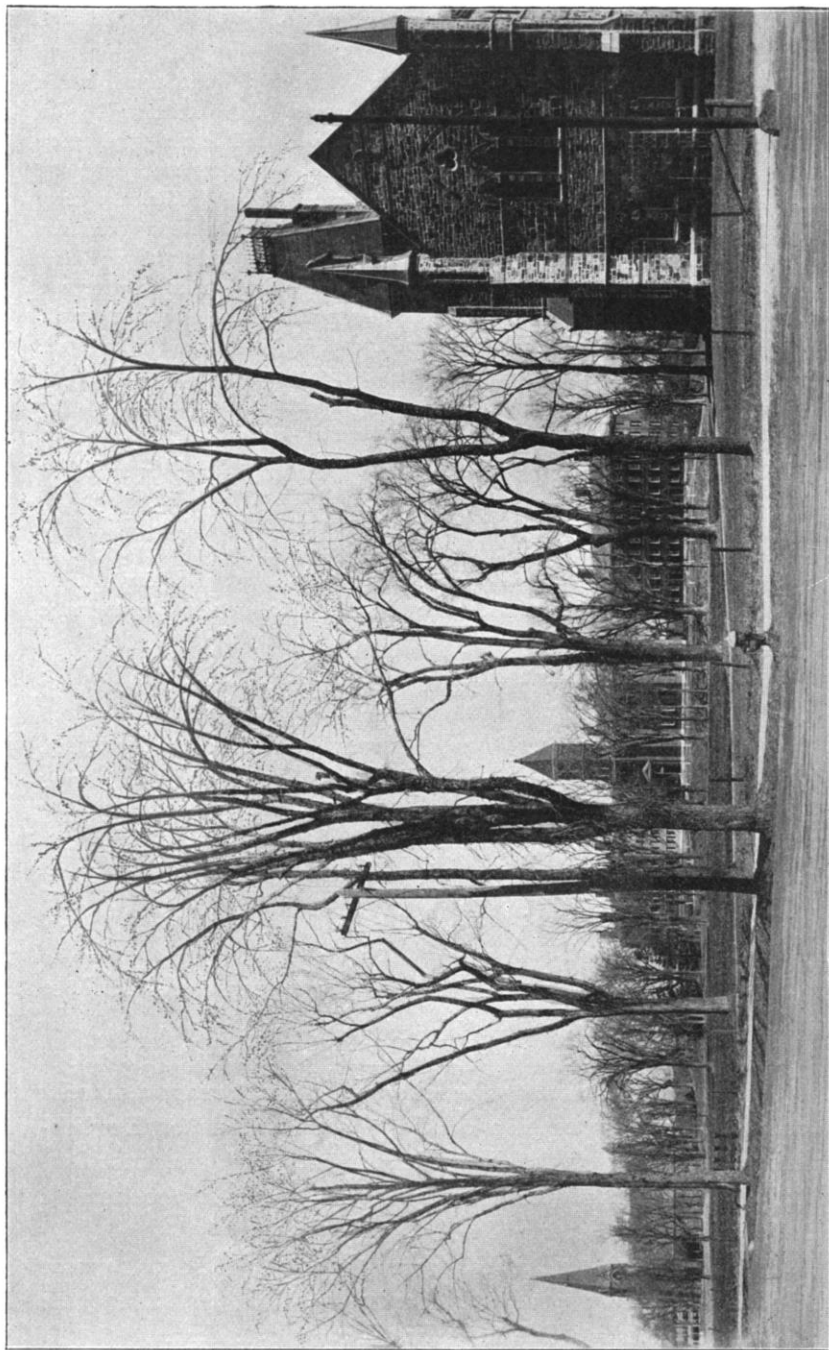
trifling matters; and, allied to this, a passion for research, a desire for both fulness and accuracy, which led him to ask, in letters to relatives and friends, for hints, illustrations, criticisms, suggestions, and facts from books accessible to his correspondents, but not to himself. His earliest sermons were criticised in family conclave at his request, and all suggestions written down and carefully weighed. Composition was always difficult, but research was the very breath of his life. Perhaps this accounts in part for the fact that almost all we have from his pen is the result of research.

His year's work in Quincy was very valuable to the church and earned the lasting gratitude of the community. But his five-years' pastorate in Salem brought greater scope to his powers and larger results. His difficulty in preparing for public utterance was met with such industry that his people never realized how hard it was for him to get time to pour himself out as he did in pastoral visitation and social helpfulness. All his life long, whether in parish or camp or seminary, he was a very successful visitor to the sick. To a womanly sympathy, tact, and tenderness he added a most manly and infectious courage and cheerfulness. His interest in that church never waned, as may be seen in a touching letter he sent to its present pastor in 1893, lamenting the impossibility of attending the funeral of one of the deacons. He said:

It ought rather to be a triumphal procession—like those with which the early Christians often interred their departed. Surely he has fought a good fight and won the crown. No man in my day was more constant in attendance at all church services, Sundays and week days; no man more faithful, generous, and judicious in upholding and extending "Crombie Street's" influence for good. He was exceptionally broad and sympathetic in his religious views and feelings; and at a time when denominational jealousies and antagonisms had an intensity which seems strange to us in these more favored days, he did much to command respect for orthodoxy in circles where otherwise it would have been held in slight esteem.

One interruption of his pastorate by the Civil War is described in a memorial sermon:²

² Delivered on December 8, 1901, in Crombie Street Church, Salem, by the pastor, REV. J. W. BUCKHAM (Salem *Saturday Evening Observer*, December 14, 1901). The three anecdotes are from other sources.



THE BUILDINGS AND GROUNDS OF ANDOVER THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY.

Hardly had the young pastor become thoroughly established in his work when the outbreak of the rebellion stirred his patriotism to its depths, and in September, 1862, he asked and obtained leave of absence for nine months to serve the Fortieth Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry as chaplain. The patriotic ardor of the pastor aroused a corresponding devotion in the church, and, in addition to several thousands of dollars freely given for the support of the Union, the church, although far from being a large one, gave lavishly of her choicest sons. Thirty-two of her young men volunteered for service in the army and navy, and of this number five never returned. Mr. Thayer made an ideal chaplain, manly, hopeful, warm hearted, trusted, beloved. When he started for the front, he was presented by friends in the church with a large gray horse, and it is remembered of him by his fellow-soldiers that he used to ride up beside some weary-looking comrade on foot and invite him to change places for a time for the sake of a rest. He was chiefly instrumental in securing the erection of a temporary house of worship and hospital in camp in Virginia, and is described as exceedingly attentive and kind to the sick of the regiment. A friend who called upon him one cold evening in his tent found that he was without a fire, and upon inquiry learned that Mr. Thayer had taken his stove to the tent of a sick soldier to make him more comfortable.

Some months before this, in the spring of 1862, a small party of civilians—of which he was one—was permitted to ride on flat cars laden with lumber from Alexandria to Manassas Junction, which had just been occupied by Union troops. These civilians plowed through the mud from the station to the camp, and while there a soldier asked if anyone would help out a foot-sore comrade with a pair of rubbers. Mr. Thayer at once took off his own and gave them; though there, if anywhere, they were indispensable.

Soon after his return to his pastorate came the call to Andover, and there his literary life began.

Three factors are evident in the literary activity of Professor Thayer: first, his natural aptitude for minute and exact research; second, his keen perception of the pressing needs of English-speaking students of the New Testament; third, the unselfishness which led him to do nearly all his work in the humble character of "translator and editor."

Even before he returned from Europe in 1864, to assume the duties of his chair, he had arranged with the author and the publisher to translate Grimm's *New Testament Lexicon*.

The work was immediately begun, but suffered from several interruptions. These were of such a nature, however, as substantially to advance the work. Professor Thayer undertook the translation and editing of Lünemann's edition of Winer's *New Testament Grammar*, and afterward that of Buttmann. Meanwhile the American Revision Committee had been organized, and Professor Thayer became a prominent member, and the recording secretary of the New Testament company. In August, 1873, he announced the translation completed, and the work of verifying the references drawing toward a close. There remained "the editorial labor requisite to adapt it to the needs of English-speaking students." In 1879 a new edition of Grimm's lexicon was issued, to which Professor Thayer contributed over four thousand corrections in references. Finally, on Christmas day, 1885, twenty-one years after the first announcement of the lexicon in this form, the American editor signed the preface of his completed work.³

His contributions to Grimm's work were these: to verify all references; to note extra-biblical usages of words; to give etymologies; to enumerate all representative New Testament verbal forms; to give with every verb its New Testament compounds; to supply passages omitted in words marked with an asterisk (a symbol indicating that every New Testament passage is noticed which contains the word thus distinguished); to note fully variations of text; to discuss synonyms; to give noteworthy renderings of A. V. and R. V.; to multiply cross-references; and to furnish references to grammars, commentaries, and Bible dictionaries, articles, etc. In addition, the appendix gives lists of words, post-Aristotelian, borrowed, biblical, and those peculiar to each New Testament author, with a complete table of forms of verbs.⁴

To judge of the value of this work it is worth while to recall a few of the words of appreciation which its appearance elicited:

The more than doubly exercised *nonum prematur in annum* has in this case been richly vindicated: it is the ripe fruit of many years of toilsome and exceedingly conscientious work by one thoroughly versed in his subject.⁵

The fact is that we have a monumental work here, the best lexicon to the Greek Testament that has ever been framed, the most valuable aid to

³ From an article by PROFESSOR C. F. BRADLEY, D.D., *Methodist Review*, 1887, p. 253.

⁴ Condensed from preface to the *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, p. vi.

⁵ PROFESSOR E. SCHÜRER, *Theologische Literaturzeitung*, November 27, 1886.

the study of the Greek Testament which America has given to the English-speaking world in our generation.⁵

Moses Stuart quoted with approval the saying of Scaliger that "a part of the daily prayer of every literary man should be thanksgiving to God that he had been pleased to make lexicographers and grammarians." I think we may in this case devoutly offer this thanksgiving, and express our gratitude to the gifted and learned scholar who through more than twenty years of life-exhausting labor has prepared for our use this combined product of centuries of research. . . . We have then in it, during its "meantime" of supremacy of which the editor modestly and almost pathetically speaks, the most complete lexicon of the New Testament existing in any language, and the one most accurate in all the details of forms, citations, references, and lists. . . . We do not hesitate to pronounce it the first of helps to the understanding of the Greek Testament.⁶

Professor Thayer's three printed lectures—"Criticism Confirmatory of the Gospels" (1871), "The Change of Attitude towards the Bible" (1891), and "Books and Their Use" (1893), to the last of which was appended a New Testament bibliography published in 1890—must not be entirely passed over. The first of the three is a long and elaborate article in the volume of *Boston Lectures* for 1871, giving a learned yet lucid and complete review of New Testament criticism from 1835. I quote a specimen of its brilliancy:

These framers of hypotheses take to themselves the light work; the task is to prove or to believe their theories. And yet such a storm of evidence concentrates itself upon them sometimes that they fly to the nearest shelter, even though, to get out of the rain, they get under the eaves. One of them has been driven to say that the doctrine of John was borrowed from Justin. Sydney Smith, you remember, had a rural neighbor who was persuaded that the hundred and fourth psalm was a plagiarism upon a devotional composition of his own.⁷

The third of the lectures is full of wise advice to theologians on reading, incidentally showing encyclopædic knowledge of the literature. But "The Change of Attitude towards the Bible" is the most characteristic work he has left in print. It combines his well-known courage and freedom with that tenacious hold on the essentials of Christianity which was equally his. Rebuking radical and traditionalist alike, it is a noble utterance.

⁵ PROFESSOR B. B. WARFIELD, *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 1887, p. 154.

⁶ PROFESSOR BRADLEY, *op. cit.*, pp. 267 f. ⁷ P. 368.

If exception might be taken to some of his illustrations, yet his conclusions will stand. The lecture is a masterpiece.

Professor Peabody's words furnish an admirable estimate of Professor Thayer's literary work :

He was one of that very limited circle of Americans whom the learned world in all countries recognizes as great scholars. Wherever the New Testament is seriously studied his work is essential to its just interpretation. I have had the privilege of witnessing the greeting offered to him in many lands by Catholic dignitaries, by German exegetes, by ecclesiastics of the Eastern Church, and everywhere as an authoritative guide, a member of the peerage of the learned world. "The task of life," he used to say, "should be the doing of one thing so that it need not be done again." That was his happy opportunity. Among the achievements of scholarship, which are so soon displaced by new results, he has bequeathed a possession which has, beyond most human works, the quality of permanence.⁸

Though it yielded little independent fruitage, Professor Thayer's work on the "Revision" cannot, in connection with his literary activity, be passed over. His services in preparing the Revised New Testament, both in its Anglo-American form of 1881 and in the American edition of 1901, probably surpassed in laboriousness those of any other member of the New Testament company. But it would be unjust to speak of any part of the work as his, since the preparation throughout to the final proof-reading was made co-operatively by all surviving members. Although the initiative of work and the burden of labor in specific tasks fell on different men, Professor Thayer carried all through the responsibility of the recording secretary.

In fulfilment of the duties of this office he kept very minute records of all suggestions, votes, etc., and did this with such accuracy that we always depended on him when questions were raised as to what had been proposed or done. He had a remarkable memory for details, and I think his recollections were generally about as definite and free from error as the written records of most men. In all questions which presented themselves in the course of the work he showed himself always to be an able and learned scholar; one whose investigations were most thorough and impartial; one whose knowledge was broad and large; one whose honesty and love of truth were most conspicuous. He was a genuine New Testament exegete; full of love for the book; full of earnest desire to discover its exact meaning; fair-minded in his consideration of the views of others; large-minded in his

⁸ Quoted from the funeral address, published in the *Congregationalist*, December 21, 1901.

Christian thought. His knowledge of words and their uses was remarkable, both as related to the Greek and to the English New Testaments. In this respect, as well as in others, he was eminently fitted for the duty to which he was called. His New Testament lexicon . . . carries in itself the evidences and the characteristics of his accurate and fair-minded scholarship. These evidences and characteristics were very manifest to all of us who were associated with him during the long period of our service as "Revisers."⁹



THE DIVINITY SCHOOL OF HARVARD UNIVERSITY.

From 1889 to 1897 the regular work of the New Testament company was intermitted, though some preparation was made for the American edition. From 1897 to 1901 the survivors labored continuously, the work of each being revised in full committee. Professor Thayer's principal work was the preparation of the headings and references, which added so much of value to the edition of 1881. During his "sabbatical year" (1898-99) he wrote from Germany of beginning his day's work at six and spending eight hours a day continuously for months

⁹ A portion of a letter from an associate of Professor Thayer in the "Revision."

on this arduous task. The laboring oar in carrying the New Testament through the press was also his, though proofs were read by each Reviser and sent to him. We cannot praise too highly the great and gratuitous labor of all the Revisers. And this is their reward: in the American Revised Version the meaning of the Bible is more accessible to all who read English than it has ever been to any people, except those to whom its original languages were living speech.

We turn now to Professor Thayer's life-work as a teacher:

His literary activity was, however, only incidental to his regular duties as a professor of New Testament exegesis. For eighteen years at Andover Seminary, and for seventeen more at the Divinity School of Harvard University, he patiently, earnestly, and successfully taught the true methods of Scripture interpretation. He was at the time of his resignation (June, 1901) probably the senior in term of service among New Testament teachers in the United States. Certainly his colleagues recognized him as at the head; and such long and faithful service, though little appreciated by the world at large, writes itself into the minds and hearts of grateful pupils.¹⁰

Professor Thayer possessed in large measure the fundamental qualifications of an interpreter of the New Testament. First and chief of these is a consecrated devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. This alone brings a man into sympathy with the authors of the New Testament, and enables him to read it in the light in which it was written, under the guidance of the same Spirit. Christ is the heart of the New Testament, and his life pulsates through it everywhere; for, as Professor Thayer used to say, "not only were men converted, but also words. New Testament Greek is current Greek born again." In a man of such a scientific mind, and so utterly free from religious sentimentality, this characteristic seldom came to the surface; but one felt it underneath, as the tourist on Vesuvius is conscious of the hidden fires within. It showed in the prayers with which his Andover classes began. His were never hackneyed or perfunctory, but always fervent with a deep sense of the solemnity of the study, and a humble petition for divine help in it.

It appeared also as the background of his scholarship. In a

¹⁰ PROFESSOR RIDDLE, *Sunday School Times*, January 18, 1902.

letter written in 1878 to a pastor who had asked help in dealing with the subject of the deity of Christ he says :

And then show that theological nescience . . . does not abate practical assurance, such as is felt by every redeemed soul ; such as was expressed by the candidate in the story, who, having in examination crossed his track again and again, and at last been met by the remark, "You can't give any reason, then, for believing in the deity of Christ?" burst out with the exclamation : "Why, bless you, man, he saved my soul!"

He ends the letter thus : "But may He who is the truth help you in the things concerning himself!" And he closes his lecture on "The Change of Attitude towards the Bible" with this "palmary argument" in favor of the change :

The blessing and promise of the new view of Scripture lies in the circumstance that it remands externalities, whether books or systems, to their proper secondary place, and brings to the front the central and all-conquering truth of Christianity, viz., personal loyalty to a personal Master—the crucified, risen, reigning Christ. That age, that church, that man cannot go far astray who strives after a life hidden with Christ in God.

His second great qualification for his work was his fervent and perennial enthusiasm for the study of the New Testament. If the first principle of oratory is action, that of teaching is enthusiasm. "Commend me," said Professor Thayer,¹¹ "to the man of one book, especially if that be the Book of books." Of the New Testament he was the ardent interpreter and prophet. No labor was too great that could further its study. All through his life a burning zeal drove him almost mercilessly along the path of his chosen work, to open that book to others. Enthusiasm has value above scholarship, though they are rarely separated, since that which inspires a pupil must first have possessed his teacher. What a man can teach his pupils will always be much less than he may inspire them to teach themselves, and no impartation of his views to others is equal to leading them to hew out their own. Here are some testimonies from Professor Thayer's pupils :

He made the driest details luminous and was my inspiration for theological study.

A permanent impression which he left upon me, and I think upon most of us, was the necessity that as ministers we should keep up scholarly habits ;

¹¹*Memorial of Ezra Abbot*, p. 31.

and it is due to him more than to anyone else that I have tried to continue my acquaintance with the Bible in the original tongues, and to keep abreast of theological study.

Not many instructions from any teacher have been of more practical value to me than his *obiter dictum* one day, that a man ought to read at least one chapter of the Greek Testament every day that he lives.

One felt in Professor Thayer's lecture-room that the one thing worth caring for was thorough scholarship; the one thing to be ashamed of was any shirking of that day's task. That feeling of shame was a frequent one with me—and salutary, I trust. More than once he said things that made my ears tingle, and would have made me very angry, except that I could not help liking him the better for saying them.

I should like to pay my tribute to that glorious and infectious enthusiasm for truest scholarship, which made every pupil try for something like it in his own work.

It seems to me that I never take up my Greek Testament without being distinctly conscious of his influence as an interpreter.

Third among Professor Thayer's qualifications was his single-eyed and unswerving devotion to truth, in loyalty to Him who said, "I am the truth." Truth was his passion. All his scholarship was enlisted in the search for it. His was the scientific mind described by the lamented Professor Rowland in his Johns Hopkins decennial address:

But for myself I value in a scientific mind most of all that love of truth, that care in its pursuit, and that humility of mind which make the possibility of error always present more than any other quality. . . . It is the only mind that values the truth as it should be valued, and ignores all personal feeling in its pursuit.¹²

Reverence for truth and mental humility were eminently characteristic of Professor Thayer. His very speech, in its careful definitions, nice discriminations, and painstaking search for the exact word, showed his striving after the truth. All he wrote, letters as well as books and articles, manifested the same characteristic. His devotion to accuracy was seen even in his dress; without a trace of finery, he was always the pink of neatness; so well dressed that you never noticed his clothes except as befitting—which is much more than fitting—the man.

His characterization of Dr. Ezra Abbot equally applies to himself:

¹² Quoted in the *Outlook*, April 27, 1901.

He is a man of positive opinions, which he does not mean to disguise. But, in the advocacy of them, he evidently studies to be scrupulously fair. He is not engaged in making out a case. He does not write like a man who has made up his mind in advance what conclusion he will reach, and is merely engaged in looking up facts to support it. History to him is not dogmatics in disguise. Nor does he so far play the partisan as to leave the mention of counter-evidence to the advocates of the other side. . . . He makes it a matter of religion to avoid everything like approximation to that suppression of the truth which is only falsehood in disguise.¹³

Professor Thayer shows the same spirit when in a letter he denounces a certain theological controversialist thus :

The supercilious flouting of facts, the perverse marshaling of miscellaneous evidence to prop up foregone conclusions, above all the mean appeals to popular prejudice, make every righteous scholar eager to "pitch in."

One of his former pupils writes: "In his passion to be strictly fair and honest, he often leaned away from orthodoxy." That may have been due to his desire to see the arguments for the other side stated as strongly as possible. In the class-room he was never (like some other teachers) content with a dialectic victory. If a student stated an objection weakly, Professor Thayer would give that objection its full scope and strength before proceeding to demolish it. So he writes to a pastor desirous of reading up on the deity of Christ :

But in preparing to present from the pulpit any doctrine of the truth of which I was *thoroughly convinced* (like the present doctrine), I have usually found myself most helped by reading the ablest books on the other side. By doing this, one not only best discovers what the actual difficulties of an unbeliever are, but has suggested to him (often) the best methods of meeting them.

Here are some testimonies from his pupils :

I never sat under one who, in spite of very definite principles of his own, made it so clear that his search was first and last for the truth ; that the goal of his final definition was whatever that search led to. This quality in Professor Thayer escaped none of his students.

He was the first theological teacher to show me that the supreme motive of the student of theology is the discovery of the truth. I came out of Professor Thayer's room with the feeling that he had a bit of truth to reveal, and that the only defense which he cared to make was for the truth ; also that,

¹³ *Memorial*, p. 38.

if there was anything brought forth in the study of the New Testament which did not tally with this, that, or the other theological system, it was the system that would have to go, in the faith that in the search for truth the true theological system would be upbuilt.

Professor Thayer made a deep impression upon me by his great candor and fairness as a scholar. While this often seemed to rob him of a certain positiveness, and leave too many question points as to the correct exegesis, it yet gave us the impression of a man absolutely fearless in his inquiry, seeking only the exactest meaning. He could not be dogmatic, and in his desire to avoid the impression of speaking with absolute finality and *ex cathedra*, he helped us by stimulating our scholarship, rather than by imposing his own. The latter method would have been easier for us, but would not have made scholars. His main purpose seemed to be to train men to use their own weapons. He had a fine scorn for the crutches of a commentary in the class-room, and repudiated the quotation of an opinion. He even repudiated his own opinion in the class-room, formerly expressed, but in the meantime revised. He was homiletically very suggestive, without making this a manifest intention. Some of the most germinant thoughts for our sermons came from his class-room.

Fourth among Professor Thayer's prominent qualifications was his untiring industry. It was his rule never to spend less time in special preparation for each class than he expected of its members. This, of course, was in addition to his years of study previously given to the subject, and the accumulated knowledge thus gathered. This rule was perhaps too exacting, but it ministered greatly to the freshness and fulness of his teaching, since his natural enthusiasm never lacked fuel. He left nothing to the inspiration of the moment that could be prepared beforehand. "In the lecture-room he stuck closely to business; would willingly permit questions and discussion, but there were no long digressions." His industry is evident in a letter to another theological teacher, where he says: "I congratulate you that your year's end is in sight. As for me, I am swimming for life!" The value he set upon industry appears in these words to his students: "Do you wish to become great? Remember it means more hours at your desk. The greater you desire to become, the more hours you must work."

Fifth, and the last here to be mentioned, among Professor Thayer's qualifications as a teacher, was his perspective of duty, which put his students and class work first. Many teachers

in various departments seem to consider it their first duty to enlighten the world, of which their classes naturally form a small and subordinate part. Professor Thayer, except during five years when he was almost entirely relieved of teaching, always regarded his seminary duties as his life-work, and gave them precedence. This was saliently evident in his cheerful willingness to give his time to any students, even to any man, who asked his help. If one of his pupils had prepared a paper on which he desired advice, Professor Thayer would go to the student's room and spend hours in hearing, discussing, and suggesting. He was always ready to take extra burdens. His labors in this direction were appreciated by his students: "When some of us desired to take special work, Professor Thayer spent an hour and a half, or even more, every Friday evening after prayers, helping us." "His patience was incredible. When I think of the outrageous things I did—mistakes, blunders—I am more and more amazed. I know that I caused him hours of extra work, but he never complained; only wilful carelessness evoked rebuke." In a word, he was always ready to "put his time against" that of any student or students who desired his aid. And he did this, not of mere kindness and good nature, but deliberately and of set purpose, judging his opportunities to influence these men individually the most valuable things his days brought to him. This is evident in such words of his as these: "It is left for me to find in you, young men, the comfort that I might have taken in my own son, who has gone from me." "You who are young must go to the front. We must stay behind and scrape lint." "You will be here when I am gone." "We have made an investment in you; now show us some returns!"

Other characteristics of the man, less closely connected with his chosen work, attract our notice. He was very generous. When a student was sick, Professor Thayer's cheery presence would soon gladden the sick-room, and he would bring a gift of fruit, if the case permitted. He often showed his appreciation of earnest students by gifts of books. To one who expressed his gratitude to him for a considerable outlay of time and money

in his behalf he said: "Don't think of it again, but just pass it on to someone else." A student seeking to enter the seminary found it wiser to go elsewhere. Professor Thayer gave him fifty dollars to make the transfer, so the student said. In last year's report of the faculty of the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge we read:

During the absence of Professor Nash from October to May, the work of the New Testament department was carried on by Professor Joseph Henry Thayer, of Harvard University. The school is deeply indebted to Professor Thayer for the valuable instruction given by him, and for his great courtesy in consenting to give it. Upon being tendered payment for his services, he divided the sum into two parts, and gave half to the American School of Oriental Studies in Jerusalem, and the other half to the New Testament department of the school, for the purchase of books.

He was equally generous of his time. He wrote long and elaborate letters full of references for the benefit of those who asked his aid. As Professor Peabody said: "He gave away more learning to casual inquirers than would equip many a scholar's mind."¹⁴ This prodigal giving seemed to him a privilege and a duty.

Another side of this same unselfishness is seen in his lowly estimate of himself. Thus he writes to a former pupil (in 1880): "Your depreciatory view of yourself I well understand. But we teachers have this one abiding consolation, 'among the blind the one-eyed man is king.'" Of a younger colleague he writes: "Glad I am that he has given so much attention to that subject, and will (as in so many other respects) supply my lack of knowledge." To a younger teacher in the same department he writes from London: "If in these parts, I should be exceedingly glad to have a walk and talk with you, for I feel quite out of relations with my professional work and the new books relating to the New Testament, and shall be glad to be brought down to date."

A characteristic instance of his modesty is found in his *List of Books for Students of the New Testament*. Under "Grammars" he mentions his own editions of Winer and Buttmann without a hint of himself as editor, and adds: "More valuable [than his

¹⁴ Funeral address, *Congregationalist*, December 21, 1901.

own edition of Winer] is Moulton's edition, by reason of the editor's copious additions." But, as a matter of fact, for nine out of ten students this is not true, as Thayer's index is about five times as extensive as Moulton's.

His well-known sensitiveness is well described by a member of the class of '77 at Andover :

He was an impulsive man, quickly showing approbation or dissent as to the scholarship and fidelity of his pupils. He was himself so intense and devoted to his high calling that he could not easily disguise his attitude toward a similar spirit or its reverse in his pupils. Sometimes he felt that he had been unjust, and then all the fine sincerity of the man came out in the frankest and humblest requital of apology. I have recollections of how he suffered in his own conscience over what he thought had been hasty judgment. It was this strong, intense, ever impetuous, but candid and broad, personality that made us love him. The very presence of the man was a training in catholicity; and, much as we admired the scholar, it was the man that left an imprint.

He always seemed not only to kindle and quicken the best selves of his students, but also to have those best selves so constantly in mind that he was indignant with them for their own sakes, "appealing from Philip drunk to Philip sober," when they fell below their best. He was patient with real dulness, but not with laziness in disguise. He would naturally be sharpest with his best pupils, just because he thought so much of them and held so high an estimate of their possibilities. In the study of the New Testament, work was worship, and hence must be worthily rendered. The glow of his enthusiasm was a holy fire, and slackness of preparation seemed almost sacrilege; indifference was irreverence.

Finally, a word as to the impression of his personality. I have said nothing of his personal appearance, because the influence of that, attractive though it was, was soon superseded. He was a handsome man in face and figure, well-proportioned, erect, athletic. But his friends, I fancy, rarely thought of this, because his beautiful soul shone through its fitting embodiment and drew them to him.

Again and again, to those who were wrestling with the problems of criticism, has it been an inspiration to hear from him, as

one who in wide erudition and advanced scholarship "knew it all," and yet held fast to every vital point of the old faith. Three passages from his letters will illustrate my meaning :

The really strong argument in support of Christ's pre-existence has always seemed to me to be the concurrent, yet (at least as respects its form) independent, representations of the biblical writers, not even excepting the synoptists ; for, although the first three gospels contain no explicit assertion of the doctrine, the personage they portray forbids his classification with ordinary men, and leaves so unique and exalted a conception of his relation to the Father that the explicit declarations of the fourth gospel awaken no surprise in the ordinary reader. In fact, the old assertion of the critics, that the fourth gospel presents a very different personage from the Messiah of the first three, is now, I believe, generally abandoned.

Indeed, how anyone who admits the exceptional character of Jesus, above all recognizes in him the embodiment of the self-manifesting power of God, can be stumbled by the statement that he (congruously enough) came into the world in an exceptional way, I never have been able to understand.

On the genuineness of John my opinion remains unchanged. Many of the embarrassments I think due to (or greatly aggravated by) misconception as to the nature of the gospels in general, and of that one in particular, and the consequent application to it of false historical requirements which it was not intended to meet.

So we admire the man of learning, but we cling to the man of faith. Above and beyond the scholar and the teacher, our hearts go out to the humble Christian believer.

Thus we find him in his answer to a former pupil, now teaching in a similar line, who wrote to him upon his resignation last spring. In these few words which follow we see the man himself : how his life is bound up with the work he lays down, how humbly he thinks of himself, how warmly he responds to affection, and above all how simply he trusts in the mercy of the Lord :

When your turn comes—may it be distant—you will know how comforting such expressions of affection and approval as you have sent me are to a veteran. For in truth the *end* is sad. It gives one a little suggestion of what it will be to die. It starts all those (self-deluded?) thoughts of how much more earnest and enterprising and noble one would make his life, if he only had the chance to live it over again. But such compassionate judgments as fellow-workers for truth can find it in their hearts to give stir the hope in the condescending kindness of Him who accepts the weakest and most desultory endeavors as though they were achievements. So from my heart I thank you.

I append a list of the more important books and articles of which Professor Thayer was the author :

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